

The Sickness

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Summary: When Snotlout falls ill, it's up to the rest of the teens to find Gothi's cure. But, without the dragons, can they make it in time? Full summary inside. Rated K for minor violence and illness. Apparently, there's now minor Hicccstrid at the end. (What happened to 'no shipping?')

1. Intro

Wow, what a long time it's been! The Gorillaz fics aren't going to be continued, I'm afraid, and neither are the Harry Potter ones. I've moved on from them (it was two years ago, so go easy on me!). Now for my new passion, How to Train Your Dragon! This is developed from a dream I had, and it's the first piece of fiction I've written since my coursework last year. Apologies for any mistakes!

Summary: when Snotlout is struck down by a mysterious illness, the teens know that it is up to them to find a cure. However, this strange sickness drives all of the dragons from Berk! How can the young riders possibly get to a cure in time without their dragons?

There he lay, in the darkness of his room, yak-pelt bed covers pulled up around his chin. The only noise that permeated the dry atmosphere was his deep, rasping breathing. The room stank of sickness.

>Hiccup stared at his friend from the doorway, a halo of light seeming to surround him. Snotlout looked impossibly small, curled up in the bed, pale and shivering. The darkness of the room seemed to invade the teen, making him seem smaller and darker still.
"And he hasn't moved at all?" Hiccup turned to look at the person he was addressing. The plump Viking, stood outside in the bright Berkian street, simply shook his head. Hiccup groaned. "What on earth could be wrong with him?"

"Beats me" Fishlegs replied, shrugging his shoulders, "but if you ask

me, he needs help. I don't think this is any normal illness. I've never seen anything like it before..." His voice trailed away into nothing, captivated by the sight of the boy, once his bully, now his ally, looking so feeble and sick in the centre of his room. He was surrounded by his favourite weapons. Axes, swords and shields lined the walls in every direction. The only other thing in the house was the small, black stove in the corner, looking as miserable and dark as the boy in the bed.

The chiefs son shook his head slowly.

>"Whatever it is, we need to get Gothi right now"<p>

"She should be on her way..." Fishlegs muttered.

"What?" Hiccup span around to face him "Who did you send to fetch her?"

When Fishlegs didn't reply, Hiccup raised his eyebrows. The boy seemed to fall apart under his gaze.

"W-well, they were the only ones here!"

"You didn't send..."

"Come on! I couldn't go..."

"But honestly, the Twins?" cried Hiccup incredulously. "You expect them to remember what they were supposed to do all the way to Gothi's shack?"

"Well, that's a bit harsh..." mumbled a voice behind them

"Yeah, owch!" another gravelly voice joined in. Hiccup placed a hand on his forehead. Great, he thought, just great.

>"Yeah!" Tuffnut protested, shoulder to shoulder with his twin sister. It was almost impossible to tell them apart, with the morning sun behind their backs, darkening their features. They had the same build, the same greasy, dirty blonde hair, the same hurt expression on their faces. "We totally knew what we were doing!"<p>

"Oh, oh really?" Hiccup scowled. "Then where is Gothi?" He gestured to the empty space behind them. There was not a tiny soothsayer to be seen. The twins looked at each other in shock and realisation.

"So that's what we were doing there!" Ruffnut growled at her twin. "I knew we forgot something"

>"This doesn't mean... this totally doesn't... if you..." Tuffnut blustered, turning on Hiccup, before settling with a loud "umph!" and trudging away, his sister in tow.<p>

Fishlegs sheepishly looked around as Hiccup's eyebrows raised further.

"Why don't you go and get Gothi, Fishlegs? I'm sure Meatlug would enjoy the ride."

"Actually, um, I was kind of, uh, hoping that, um..." The plump teen stared intently at his toes. Hiccup sighed deeply and changed tact.

"Where's Astrid? I haven't seen her all morning"

"Over here!" Came the cry, and a bright cyan Nadder descended from the sky, landing softly on the ground near them. Astrid herself, tall and blonde, slid off her dragon's back and, tossing a scrap of chicken over her shoulder for Stormfly to catch, jogged over. "I can't believe I'm asking this, but how is he?" She enquired, leaning into the room. Hiccup lead her in, followed by Fishlegs, who was tentatively tiptoeing, as though it might prevent him from also becoming ill.

"He hasn't moved all morning." Hiccup reported. "The fever is getting worse and he's showing no signs of recovering. We were going to get Gothi, but Fishlegs decided-"

"Okay, I admit that sending the Twins was a stupid idea!" Fishlegs bawled. "There, I said it, are you happy?"

Both of his friends looked at him, askance.

"Well, that certainly clears that up" The chief's son said mockingly.

All of a sudden, there was a hideous, rumbling, snorting noise from the bed, followed by the most monstrous fit of coughing ever heard. Fishlegs recoiled, with Astrid and Hiccup exchanging worried looks.

Fishlegs was the first to recover. "Guys, go and get Gothi. I'll see what I can do until you get back"

"I'm staying too" Astrid scowled. "It's hardly fair for you two to have to do all the dirty work"

"Well then, looks as though it's just me..." the final teen sighed, heading for the door.

"Hurry, Hiccup" Astrid breathed, "I don't know how much time he has left..."

Well that was short. Woohoo! Stay tuned for part 2.

2. Gothi

Okay, here's part 2. Do bear with me if, after this, I don't upload as regularly, I am a full-time A level student and work must come first! Okay, I'll shut up now. Enjoy!

Hiccup squinted as he left Snotlout's house. It was almost mid-day, with the sun arching over the small village of Berk. He looked around, taking a deep breath of the fresh air and enjoying the wind that rustled through his mop of brown hair. Around him, the town bustled with activity, with carts of fish being pulled here and there and street vendors shouting their wares to anyone who would listen.

Then, there were the dragons.

Perched on every rooftop, observing the humans below or playing

aerial tag, dragons of every sort buzzed, flapped or stamped by. There were Nadders, Nightmares, Gronkles, even the odd Zippleback, and every beast was decked in an assortment of pastel colours that shone brightly in the sunshine. Summer on Berk didn't last very long, but it was a great relief when it came.

Hiccup turned to the sea. It shimmered and sparkled, the light dancing off its many waves, and far, far away, The boy thought he saw a huge Cauldron surface. He smiled. Yes, summer on Berk was a great thing.

"Toothless! Where are you, Bud?" He called, looking around for the curious, green-eyed menace. Almost immediately, he was answered with a low call, the dragon himself crashing through the street and bounding around him like a puppy. Sometimes, Hiccup doubted whether the dragon could actually control his body, or whether it just flailed around wildly in any way it pleased.

>"Whoa there, Bud, you're gonna knock something-"

CRASH!

"...over." With a resigned sigh, he grabbed the dragon's neck strap and swung himself aboard. With a breezy apology to the owner of the overturned cart, he snapped his metal leg into place and they were away, the streets falling away rapidly beneath the dragon's powerful wing-beats.

Toothless carried him swiftly across the island, the ground eaten up by his incredible speed. He turned his head and growled softly.

>"No, not today, buddy," Hiccup sighed "We need to go to Gothi straight away."

The dragon turned his head back, murmuring quietly in displeasure. He adored the tricks he and his rider often performed when they rode. However, there was a certain urgency in his tone today that told the Night Fury there would be no playing today.

"Down, Toothless. We're here," smiled the chief's son. The sleek, black dragon folded his wings and they descended to the small shack. Perched on a magnificent sea stack, the moss-covered wood told stories to anyone who dared to listen. It opened out onto the sea, a yawning void below that had almost swallowed both twins, albeit on separate occasions. Toothless perched on the over-hang, wobbling dangerously as he gained his balance and as Hiccup dismounted.

The tiny soothsayer was hunched over in the darkened corner of the shack. Smiling pleasantly, she turned to face him, though her face fell as she saw the urgency of his expression.

"Gothi, we need you to come with us" Hiccup enquired rapidly. "I'll explain on the way, but Snotlout is really, really sick. He needs your help"

>With a simple nod, the old woman approached Toothless and he stayed as still as possible as she clambered up onto his back. Then, with Hiccup back in his saddle, the dragon released his grip on the overhang and spread his wings.

They landed gently in the street, once again outside Snotlout's cabin.

Almost immediately, the dragon spooked at two figures running wildly down the street, screaming.

"Run for your lives!" Tuffnut yelped.

"It's gonna get us!" Ruffnut wailed in return, and the two of them quickly disappeared around the corner.

>"Well, that wasn't weird at all" Hiccup quipped. Astrid must have heard them coming, because she immediately dashed out of the hut to meet them.
"Hiccup!" She called, "It's got Fishlegs!"

She wasn't lying. The plump Viking was slumped against the side of Snotlouts bed, covered all over with blankets and yak pelts. He was shivering and pale, but still co-operative, unlike the boy in the bed behind him. Gothi entered the small shack and began to examine both patients, while Hiccup and Astrid stood by the door, talking in hushed voices.

"Do you actually know how to read what she writes on the floor?" Hiccup asked, fully aware that he couldn't himself

"Sort of" the blonde replied "You'll have to give me a minute, though"

"Toothless! What are you doing?" Hiccup hissed as his dragon brushed them both roughly aside to fulfil his curious nature. However, on sight and smell of the sickness, his face took the expression he usually used for eels and the likes. He quickly retreated, moaning softly.

"What is it, bud? What's wrong?" His ever-caring rider followed him out onto the street. Toothless gave a shouting roar and bounded off up the street, not turning back.

"What's wrong with him?" Astrid's voice in his ear made Hiccup jump.

>"I-I don't know... maybe... maybe dragons can catch this too?" He guessed. She raised an eyebrow.<p>

"Whatever it is, I think Gothi is finished..."

The teens watched intently as Gothi softly drew in the dirt. The tiny soothsayer twisted together a myriad of strange symbols, and Astrid studied them carefully, frowning with intensity. The twins had joined them, finally, and were peering over the other teens shoulders. After a minute, Gothi lifted her staff and placed it beside her once again.

The silence held.

"She says... I think she says..." Astrid squinted slightly.

"...we need more Yak pie?" Tuffnut questioned, setting off the chain reaction.

"Ooh, yeah! And some bread"

"Okay, here's what we're going to do. I'm gonna-"

THWACK

"You're gonna shut up!" Astrid snarled, giving the brother a good, hard slap in the forehead. While he rubbed his wound and his sister chuckled, she continued. "She says she has everything except one ingredient."

"And that would be?" Hiccup enquired.

Before either twin had a chance to start up again, Astrid blurted out: "Purple Herb-Grass"

I know it doesn't seem like the twins are in it much, but they will be, I assure you. So, what is this Purple Herb-Grass? You will find out soon. _

Fighting the urge to call it Purple Grerb..._

3. The Dragons

Hi again! I'm pleasantly surprised to see the amount of views this story has gained so far. Thanks to all of you for helping me achieve this! Of course, I'm really doing this to express my passion for How To Train Your Dragon and to weave a story with the characters in it._

It might be obvious to some of you, but I have trouble fitting too many characters into one narrative, hence why Fishlegs and Snotlout are sitting this one out... Anyway! On with the story!_

All of a sudden, the small shack was shaken with great force. They heard a Monstrous Nightmare's call and heavy footsteps on the roof. Looking at each other in surprise, the teens dashed outside to see what on earth was going on.

Almost immediately, the twins threw themselves to the ground to avoid a low-flying Nadder, staring after it as it joined the hoards of dragons that seemed to be streaming off the shores of Berk, away from the village.

>"Where are the dragons going?" Astrid screamed, covering her head. The twins exchanged glances, and all eyes fell on Hiccup. The chief's son looked around him.
"I... I don't know" He admitted grudgingly.

"Barf! Belch! Come back!" Ruffnut cried, reaching out to her dragon. Her brother placed his hand on her shoulder and pulled her back. Suddenly, Stormfly came crashing by in a panic, following the other dragons. She seemed to pause as she flew over her rider, but the fear was too strong, and the Nadder chirruped sadly as she soared away.

>"No, Stormfly..." Astrid whispered. "Come back..."<p>

A familiar form came bounding down the street, heading in the same direction as the others. However, the Night Fury had no way to follow them. He couldn't fly.

"Toothless!" Hiccup cried "I'm so glad to see you, bud!" Dashing towards his dragon, the boy went to embrace that smooth, black neck, but the dragon pulled away, regarding him with a strange look in his wide, green eyes. "...Toothless?"

The dragon looked out across the sea, and then back to his rider. There was a strange look in his eyes. A very, very sad look. Apologetic. Guilty. Almost as though he were saying goodbye. "No, Toothless... please don't go... not you..." Hiccup whined in a small voice. The Night Fury leant down, allowing his boy to take his jaw in his hands, stroke his soft, scaly nose. "No..." the boy whispered.

Toothless's head jerked back, and with a final growl, he threw back his head and screeched. The sound carried for miles, echoing off the tall mountains and around the low coves, and far, far out to sea. Then, he ran.

The Night Fury bolted, as though he'd been burned, running faster than he'd every run before, straight as a die down the street. Hiccup let out an anguished cry. "Toothless!" The dragon rider gave chase. There was no way he could keep up with the dragon, but that didn't stop him trying. Tears brimmed in his eyes and threatened to spill down his cheeks. The hard, painful lump in his throat made it hard to breathe. Gasping, he stumbled.

>Toothless had made it to the town's edge, and was still running, full tilt, straight for the sea. In a sudden flurry of movement, an enormous Typhoomerang appeared from behind the cliff face, answering the Night Fury's call. Torch. In one enormous leap, Toothless landed on his back.<p>

Neither dragon looked back.

Hiccup fell to his knees, wheezing and spluttering, utterly lost without his companion. His heart was tearing itself in two, as though Toothless was a part of himself that was now left as a gaping hole in his very being. Gritting his teeth, he held back the sobs that threatened to wrack his body. Gone, he thought. He's gone.

All of a sudden, he felt a warm hand on his shoulder. Without even looking up, he knew who it had to be. Astrid knelt beside him, not looking at him, simply staring out to sea. Just her presence was a comfort to Hiccup, and he found himself leaning against her, eyes closed, allowing her to support him, both in body and mind.

"Astrid..." he whispered miserably.

"Yeah?"

"Where did the dragons go?"

Ooh, the fluff! I enjoyed the fluff. The fluff was supposed to be friend/friend fluff, but interpret it how you like.

I feel like this chapter is very short, but I wanted to devote a whole chapter to the dragon's leaving because it's such a huge part of the story. Oh well, enjoy!

4. Cliff Walk

Okay, so after the last chapter, I've decided that I need to make the chapters longer. Hopefully, this one will be long enough! Very

soon, there shall be boars, danger and more exiting bits!
Enjoy._

"She says the dragons left because of the sickness." Astrid announced. The rest of the teens were clustered around her and Gothi. Hiccup stood a little way back, looking thoughtful, hand on his chin.

"I-It makes sense" Fishlegs croaked from behind them. "It's the only thing- _Ack! Ack!_- â€œ the only thing that's changed." He pulled his covers tighter around himself.

"So, where can we find this Purple grassy herby thingy anyway?" Tuffnut asked, brows knitted together. The teens leaned in as Gothi began to draw a map on the dirt floor.

>"The meadows on the other side of Berk," Astrid informed them, "Where the Dragon-Nip fields are. The herb grows with it."
 "Makes sense, I guess" Hiccup muttered. "Well, what are we waiting for? Let's get going!" The teens looked at him for guidance. "Astrid, grab some weapons, I'll gather some food, and Ruff and Tuff... Just do whatever you guys do. Meet me back here in half an hour. We've got to find this Herb-Grass"

"So, what you're saying is, we're going to walk across the island, just to find some grass?" Tuffnut enquired, looking unimpressed. "Doesn't sound that fun to me."

Astrid glared at him. "So, a dangerous cliff-top walk, followed by a forest full of vicious wild boar that could rip you to bits in seconds isn't exiting enough for you?"

A light seemed to come on in both twins eyes, and they chimed to one another, "Cool!"

Hiccup looked around his party. Though the twins weren't his first choice of partners, Astrid was certainly top of his list. Honestly, he could think of worse people to travel with.

"Hey, Hiccup!" Tuff grabbed his attention. "Is it okay if I bring Macey? She'll get lonely on her own..." He lifted up the bright, reflective mace to show the chief's son. Ruffnut's face turned darker than a winter night.

>"What did you bring that hunk of junk for?" She snarled, baring her teeth. Tuffnut returned her scowl.<p>

"Macey wanted to come!"

"She's gonna weigh you down big time!"

"So do you!"

"Are you calling me fat?!" The twin's helmets clashed together, and Ruffnut looked ready to gut her brother on the spot.

"So what if I am? What are you gonna do?"

"Oh, you really wanna know?"

"Well, yeah, I wouldn't ask if I didn't."

Ruff pulled back, hands on her hips. "Why don't you just guess?" She smirked as she watched her brother struggle to think.

"Uhm... uh... just... gimme a sec... um..."

"Guys, please" Hiccup sighed. He gestured towards the house. "Two riders down, no dragons, going to find the cure? Remember?"

It didn't stop them, because at that exact moment, Tuffnut decided it was a good idea to mutter under his breath, "Don't worry, Macey. You're still much prettier than her." Ruffnut was not stupid, and adding that to the fact that her brother never really understood the meaning of subtlety, she turned savagely to face him, ready to tear him apart.

"What did you say?" Her voice was low, gravelly and sinister. Her brother retreated, a look of terror plastered on his features, and spun around to run. He didn't get far before, with a earth-shattering Viking war-cry, his sister tackled him to the ground and set upon him, driving her fists into any soft part of him she could reach.

"Guys!" Astrid finally snapped (She couldn't mask that secretly, she'd been enjoying this) "This is serious!" When that didn't stop them, she stormed over and wrapped her arms around Ruffnut's waist, tossing her a few meters away. Both twins stood, each glaring daggers at the other, and walked back over to Hiccup.

"Okay! I've got a pack of food here. It shouldn't take more than two days to get there and back, but we will have to ration it. Astrid, what weapons did you pick up?"

"I've got three throwing axes and this," She smirked, proudly displayed her double-ended fighting axe.

"Great, and along with my knife and... Macey that should be enough to defend ourselves." The chief's son looked thoughtful for a second, and then nodded. "Okay, gang, I think we're ready."

"Ugh, we've been walking forever!" Tuffnut moaned, dragging his feet. "When will this ever end!"

"Tuff, we've been walking for ten minutes!" Astrid sighed.

"Oh... well it feels like forever."

Astrid rolled her eyes. She was leading the team from the front, Hiccup at her shoulder. Tuffnut was in the middle, and Ruffnut was bringing up the rear, lagging behind a little. She'd looked a little sorry for herself since she'd lost her cool with Tuffnut and preferred to stare at the ground without talking. The other twin himself was beginning to develop a black eye and was clutching Macey to his chest, but he was talkative as ever.

"So, I was thinking, Purple Herb-Grass, the name's a bit boring, you know?"

Astrid sighed, "I think it's fine"

"Well, I was thinking maybe we should re-name it. Like... what about

Purple... Hrass! Come on, it sounds cool!"

"How about Purple Grerb?" Ruffnut piped up from behind him.

"Yeah..."

"Why don't you just call it "Lloyd", like everything else?" Astrid mused, the corners of her mouth turning up in amusement.

"Pfft, that's a stupid name! No, I like Grerb. It sounds... Grerb-y."

Ruffnut's head noticeably lifted.

Hiccup stopped, prompting the group to do the same.

>"Okay, gang, we're here. This is the cliff-top walk, and it's very dangerous, so be careful! Walk in single file. Astrid, lead the way."

"Why don't you lead the way, Hiccup?" She asked, gesturing to the pathway.

"Hmm, lemme think. Maybe it's because you've been leading since we got out here?"

"Feeble excuse," Astrid scoffed and turned to head for the path.

They walked on in silence, glancing over the edge of the sandy path to the toiling sea below. Rocks rose from the sea like bony fingers, thin and deadly.

>"I don't like this.." Ruffnut muttered, staring over the edge. She was used to heights and flying, but this was nothing like being on Barf. It made her stomach flip.
"are you... are you sure this is safe?"

"Of course it is!" Astrid laughed, kicking at a large rock on the cliff edge.

It happened so quickly. The ground gave way. The pathway shook. And Astrid went tumbling down the cliff face in a flurry of rock.

5. A Spot of Lunch

Well now! I was a little bit cruel last chapter and left you on a (literal) Cliff-hanger, didn't I? Well, don't worry, all will be resolved. Astrid's tumbling down the cliff face! What happens next?_

"Astrid!" Hiccup cried, throwing himself forward and snatching her arm, pulling her descent to a sudden halt.

"Hiccup!" She yelped, "help me!"

"It's okay, Astrid, just hang on!" Hiccup could feel his body slipping against the loose rock and gravel. Both of Astrid's hands wrapped his arm in a vice-like grip. He struggled to stop himself sliding, but it was no use; his midsection was already hanging over

the void. Eyes wide, he looked down at her white face.

"Gotcha! Hang on, Hiccup!" He heard the gravelly voice behind him and felt rough hands grab his ankles, pulling him back. Ruffnut heaved with all her strength, her brother's arms around her middle to help her, and slowly, slowly, the twins pulled their companions back onto the pathway and out of danger. Exhausted, the pair flopped down onto their backs, panting. Astrid clung to the chief's son, shivering violently. His arm was red from her grip.

"It's okay, you're safe," He assured her, patting her shoulder awkwardly. She pulled away and sat, hunched over, regaining her composure and hiding her pink cheeks.

"Whoa, Hiccup, don't do that again!" Tuff huffed, completely unprovoked.

"Me? Astrid was the one who fell!" The rider retorted, taken aback. He gave Tuff a questioning look, which the twin simply shrugged off.

"Wow, guys..." Astrid sat up, genuinely flattered by the bravery of her friends. "Thanks... I guess." She swept her fringe out of her eyes. The others looked over at her and smiled slightly; she found herself smirking too, the hammering of her heart slowing.

"Just... don't do that again, okay?" Hiccup chastised.

"Wouldn't dream of it," She replied.

"Hey, is anyone else hungry? I'm starving!" Ruffnut broke the serious mood, her eyes lit up and shining. Her brother, on the other hand, looked less interested.

"Sure," Hiccup chuckled. "Let's get around this great hole Astrid has made, and then we'll have a snack. I'd say we could all use it..." He gave an odd look to the twins, who seemed to be staring at each other for no reason. "Uh... okay, come on..."

Hiccup led the way around the gaping hole, treading carefully through the heather at the edge of what was once the path. Astrid wouldn't even look down there: she'd seen quite enough already that day. Ruffnut was clinging to the back of the blonde's shirt, her brother clasping the back of hers. Once clear of the fallen pathway, they found a suitable place to stop for a rest. Hiccup handed out a small bread roll to each team member, taking tiny bites of his own as he looked around at the faces of his friends. Ruffnut was wolfing down her food, Astrid daintily pulling pieces off and chewing thoughtfully and Tuffnut, just staring at the bread in his hand. He sniffed it, then leant back against a rock, the roll left to balance on his knee. The dragon rider's brow furrowed.

"Something wrong with that bread, Tuff?"

"What?" The twin regarded him with defensive eyes. His sister also turned to look at him.

"You gonna eat that?" She asked, eyeing the bread with hungry eyes.

"Nah," he muttered, "You have it..."

As Ruff snatched the roll up, Hiccup raised an eyebrow. "Aren't you hungry, Tuff? It's not like you to pass up food."

Ruff turned once again to regard her brother. "Yeah..." She scowled. "What have you done to it? Did you dribble on it or something? Ugh, disgusting..."

"I didn't spit on it"

"I bet you did..."

"I didn't!"

"Prove it."

"How?"

Ruff shoved the roll into his face. "Eat it." She implored.

"No, Ruff. I'm not hungry."

"Eat it."

>"No."<p>

"Yes!"

"No!" Tuff scowled. "Leave me alone, Ruffnut." He turned away moodily, and the joy in his sister's eyes melted away with the smirk on her face.

"Geez..." She muttered, taking a bite. "You don't need to get so testy..."

The team leader watched the exchange with as much interest as Astrid, and they shared a look of surprise and worry. Astrid leaned towards Hiccup.

"Tuffnut, not eating?" She muttered under her breath.

"I know. Let's keep an eye on him..."

They pressed on towards the forest. Having flown this way on their dragons so many times, the walk seemed lonely and long. Tuffnut spent the whole journey observing his boots in close detail, experimenting with what kind of things he could do without falling over. His sister thought about flying on Barf and Belch, and about destroying other people's property for fun. She often wore a smirk, her eyes gazing dead ahead, glassy and unseeing.

Astrid and Hiccup, however, didn't have the twin's amazing ability to amuse themselves so easily. Every few steps, Hiccup would hear his companion stop, look up, then carry on again, and he himself had taken to sniffing and sighing deeply for no reason. The forest just didn't seem to get any closer.

"So..." Hiccup muttered to Astrid, trying to make conversation. He turned his head while he walked. "What are we supposed to do with this Herb-Grass when we find it? Do we... prepare it or

something?"

"Nah" Said Astrid breezily, "We just take it back to Gothi."

"I swear this trip is taking forever. We've been out for hours and we haven't even reached the forest yet! I've only got enough food for two days."

>"Hiccup..."<p>

"We've got to cross the whole island! I mean, I didn't think it'd be easy, but I thought it would be better than-"

"Hiccup!" Astrid scowled.

"What?" The boy was clueless.

"Turn around"

Hiccup turned his head and was met by a sight that almost made him cry out with joy. He stopped in his tracks to behold it's glory, while the rest of his team walked into the back of Astrid behind him.

"Whoa..." Sighed Tuffnut, "This is way better than feet..."

Before them stood the forest, finally. It was now just a short walk through to the Dragon-nip fields. Maybe Hiccup's estimate wasn't that bad after all.

Woohoo! Now the real fun begins! What's wrong with Tuff? And what dangers lurk in the depths of the forest? Find out soon!

If anyone actually fancies PMing me their guesses as to what's wrong with Tuffnut, there may be a drabble of their choice on offer..._

6. Siblings

Now it's time for the teens to go through the forest! It is revealed in this chapter why they didn't just go straight through the forest from the village, because I do realise that it probably would have been easier to do that and not walk along the cliffs. Please R+R, I really want some feedback to improve on! Anyway, Allons-y!_

"Fantastic!" Hiccup grinned. He looked up at the tall, looming pines and smiled to himself. "It's not far now, guys."

"Good, 'cause I'm getting really tired" Tuffnut complained, hunching over. His sister gave him a look to quiet him down, but, while no-one was looking, the look turned to worry. It wasn't like Tuff to get tired this easily, was it?

Astrid stepped forward, looking between the grey tree trunks.

"Remind me again why we didn't go through it in the first place?"

>"Wild boar. It's their breeding season, which means the mothers are

going to be hugely protective of their young. I needed to minimise the risk: We can't lose a team member now..."<p>

There was a cough from behind them. The hair on the back of Hiccup's neck stood on end. The two turned slowly, almost not wanting to see.

Tuffnut stared back, his skin deathly pale and clammy, although he still seemed clueless.

>"Why's everyone looking at me like that?" He said slowly, then looked bewildered. "Aah, my voice! What's going on?" He stumbled back a step. "Oh no..."<p>

The others stood, rooted to the spot, as he put a hand to his forehead and, as if in slow motion, his knees gave way beneath him.

"Tuffnut!" Hiccup cried, racing forwards to his comrade's side. "Oh Tuff, not you!"

"Hiccup, what's happening to me?" He asked, almost like a child.

"You've got the sickness, Tuff..."

The brother was silent, for once in his life, really thinking hard. "Not good... right?"

"No..."

"So, what do we do now?" Astrid muttered softly, kneeling beside Hiccup and Tuffnut.

"I... I don't know" Hiccup stood and walked a few paces away, trying to clear his head. His thoughts seemed to be screaming around his head, so instead of adding more noise, he began to think aloud "We can't leave him behind, who knows what will happen. There's nowhere around here safe enough to leave him, but if we take him with us, someone will have to carry him, and..."

"One of us could get sick too..." Astrid finished for him. "Oh, man, this is not good." She took a rag from the pocket of her bag and wetted it with water from her water-skin. Dabbing Tuffnut's forehead gently, she turned to his twin, who'd been rooted to the spot for a long time, a look of horror plastered on her sharp features.

"Uh... Ruff? You okay?" She ventured to ask. The girl blinked and stepped back.

"He's... he's sick..." She stuttered simply.

"Yes, we've established that," Astrid scowled sarcastically.

"But... we're twins, Astrid. If Tuff gets sick, then... then I get sick too..."

"That's a load of rubbish, Ruff. Don't be stupid" Astrid glared at her. Tuffnut lifted his head to look at his sister, who gulped under his gaze.

"I can't do this..." she whispered, taking another few steps away from her fallen twin. Astrid gave her a searching look, her temper really being tested. The blonde could only be patient with the twins nonsense for so long before she got fed up, and she could feel it happening already. Now was not the time for this.

"Ruffnut, for Thor's sake, stop being an idiot and at least try to help Hiccup-"

>"You're the idiot! You're sitting next to him!"<p>

"I'm trying to help him. More than you're doing"

"I'm outta here," Ruffnut snorted and span around, stalking away. She wasn't risking her health for her idiot brother. Anyway, he was with Astrid and Hiccup, so he'd be fine, wouldn't he? She took a deep breath. The twins were always together. They always did stuff as a pair, and things just didn't go well when they were apart. They had an uncanny ability to catch up with one another when they least expected to. So why on earth was she leaving him, especially when he need her?

As she tried to get the thoughts out of her head, she heard him call for her.

"Ruffnut... sis..."

It stopped her dead in her tracks. She blinked.

"Ruff, please... don't you leave me too..."

She tried to close her eyes, block it out, wish it all away. Tuff isn't sick. He isn't. _

"Everyone's leaving me... I mean, not everyone, but..."

"Idiot," She heard herself say, "Barf and Belch are the only ones who've left you."

"Well... shut up."

Ruffnut turned around, observing her brother. His eyes were piercing blue against his pale, clammy skin and grey-blond hair, and they were pleading. Just pleading with her. She pursed her lips, almost pouting, because she knew she was beaten. Just that look was enough to drag her back, step by step, to his side, where she fell to her knees and placed a hand against his cheek.

"I'm going to kill you. You know that, right?"

"Sure, whatever," He chuckled, smirking, and then coughed loudly.
"Ugh, what a bummer."

"Yeah, like you" She retorted and looked up to her friends. Astrid had taken the cue to leave and talk with Hiccup, and they both stood, looking back at her with pitiful eyes. She glowered moodily. Pity was one thing she couldn't stand to see, especially aimed at herself.

"Right," she growled loudly, "Come on, you lump. You've gotta get up and walk. I'm not carrying you; that's Belch's job."

"But, sis... I'm sick..."

"Oh, shut up!" She jabbed him in the ribs, then stood over him. "Grab my arms, I'll give you a lift. Just quit whining!"

Hauling her brother to his feet, she threw his arm around her shoulders and helped him to stand. At first, he could almost stand by himself, but it was clear his strength was failing fast.

"Come on, already!" Ruffnut shouted to her companions. "I can't hold him up all day! Let's just get on with it." Hiccup and Astrid seemed delighted that they could continue, and wasted no time preparing to venture into the woods. Meanwhile, Ruffnut and Tuffnut had inevitably began to argue.

"Let me carry Macey, you'll only drag her along the ground. Or better, leave her behind."

"No way!" Tuffnut lifted the mace to his chest and held it tightly.

"Tuffnut!"

"Never! You were always jealous of her! You're just looking for an excuse to get rid of her!"

"I'll get rid of you in a minute!"

"You're not carrying Macey! She prefers me."

"Oh, alright, already!" Ruffnut flicked her brother's nose.

"Ow! Hey, is that new?"

"No, you're delirious. I've done that hundreds of times."
>"I still like it..."<p>

"Are you two ready back there?" Hiccup shouted over his shoulder. He and Astrid were ready to enter the forest, just waiting for the two argumentative twins to join them. After a few tentative steps, Tuffnut found his legs again, and they began to make their slow progress into the dark and foreboding forest.

There was meant to be a ton of other stuff in this chapter, but I felt, after filling two pages, as though it might just be better to leave it till the next chapter. Please R+R, it's much appreciated!

—

7. The Forest

The teens start their journey into the perilous forest! What kind of trouble will they get into? Read on to find out! R+R!

The trees loomed above them, dark and foreboding, blocking out the light from the sun. Underfoot, the springy moss and mud clung to their boots, especially those of Tuffnut, whose feet dragged along the ground. The whole forest smelt musty and damp, with pine-sap scents permeating. The grim silence was broken as Hiccup stumbled and

fell.

"Owch! Damned root," He muttered, picking himself up. Behind him, the twins sniggered. Astrid helped him to rid himself of the dirt he had picked up from the fall, and then he looked his group over. "Are you all okay to carry on? We can rest if you want."

The teens exchanged glances. "I think we're okay" Astrid replied.

"Well, fine, but perhaps we could at least take Tuff off Ruff's hands?"

Ruffnut gave her leader an odd look. "He's not on my hands, Hiccup. He's on my shoulder." She laughed. "And he calls himself 'An Adventurer', " she snorted to her brother, who gave a weak smirk.

"Actually, no, don't call myself that, and you know what I mean. You must be tired by now, right?"

"Ruffnut, tired?" Tuff croaked. "She never gets tired"

"Heh, right?"

Hiccup shrugged, rubbing his leg. Although the metal prosthetic was usually comfortable enough, it was beginning to hurt with all this walking. Astrid shot him a look that said are you okay? To which he nodded and carried on walking. The sunlight fell in patches before them as they trudged, and their packs began to feel heavier and heavier.

"Ugh, is no-one else starving?" Ruffnut called. Hiccup and Astrid turned, not realising how far back the twins were getting.

"I'm pretty hungry. I mean, I think I am," Tuffnut scowled at himself. "Maybe that's sick.. no, it's hungry... nope, definitely sick... no, wait..."

"If you puke on me, I'm not carrying you anymore." Ruff glowered. Her brother was silent.

"Maybe this is a good time for lunch?" Hiccup asked.

"Make that dinner, Hiccup. By the look of the sun, it's about 4 o'clock" Astrid corrected him.

"I don't care. I'm still hungry" The sister complained, getting a better grip around her brother's waist.

"Okay then, gang. Let's get some food down us all. At least it'll give us some energy." Hiccup swung his pack down from his shoulder and opened it up, handing out another bread roll and some cheese to everyone. Tuffnut, slumped against a tree, declined quietly.

"I don't really feel like eating. I feel all sicky and gross" He muttered

"Tuff, you haven't eaten all day!" His sister sniffed. "You'll shrivel up like a prune or something"

"Like auntie Mable?"

"Yeah, like that. But she always ate like a yak..."

"I know, I never got that..."

Hiccup sat next to the twin, chewing his own food slowly, and then pulled a piece of the roll off. "Come on, Tuffnut, you've got to eat something," He pleaded, placing the bread in his friend's palm. Tuffnut just stared at it and began coughing. The team's leader noticed his sister watching attentively from his other side.

"Tuff, eat your bread. Mother will kill me if you don't eat." She tried to sound uncaring, but her face showed that it was more. Sighing, her brother finally put the bread in his mouth.

"Tastes like wood. Eugh!" He complained.

"Try some cheese, then," Hiccup offered. This time, Tuffnut didn't put up a fight.

Although he hadn't eaten much, Tuffnut definitely felt better as they carried on walking. He was still prone to regular coughing fits, though, and his skin wasn't regaining its colour. As time went on, the good feeling began to drain away, along with his energy. Every step was soon taking effort, his legs heavy. The air began to smother him, making it hard to breathe. Gulping, he stumbled. Ruffnut looked at her brother. She saw the beads of sweat on his brow, the tired look in his eyes, the heaving of his chest. She knew, even before it happened, that he couldn't carry on.

Tuffnut's legs gave way, and he and his sister went crashing to the ground.

"Tuff!" The twin's anguished cry rang out. Hiccup and Astrid span around, their blood running cold at the sight of their companions sprawled upon the ground. They exchanged looks before rushing over.

"Tuff, come on! Don't do this!" Ruffnut shouted, writhing free of his arm and kneeling over him. She scowled as she looked him over, as though searching him. Then, as Hiccup and Astrid arrived, she sat back on her haunches, defeated. "Now what do we do?" She asked, clueless. The other two exchanged glances once again.

"Well..." Hiccup muttered, "I guess someone has to carry him."

She watched both their gazes fall on herself before glowering, "Ugh, okay, already! Stupid brother getting sick all the time and-"

"Shh" Astrid hushed her. There was movement in the bushes around them.

"What now?" Ruff grumbled loudly.

"Will you be quiet? This is serious!" the blonde hissed. She and Hiccup looked around themselves. They could now make out quite clearly the tell-tale snorting and snuffling of wild boar. Their red eyes glowed from the undergrowth as one or two pushed their way

through and stood before the team. They were huge, black, hulking figures, thick-set and strong. Tuffnut made a quiet noise of fear behind them as the other three stood, back to back, to face the boars.

"Not good..." Hiccup whispered.

"Not at all" Astrid replied. "We're surrounded..." She brought out her axe, handing Hiccup one of her throwing axes (It was actually impressively large for something that was made to be thrown). The boars advanced.

"I don't expect now is a good time to tell you I'm not armed?" Ruffnut whimpered. She felt a tug on her trouser leg and turned to her brother. "What now? We're in the middle of something!" She growled. Her brother looked down at Macey, still clutched to his chest, and released his grip on her, handing the mace to his sister.

"Use... her..." He wheezed. Taking it, Ruffnut looked genuinely grateful, and tested it's weight in her hands. Macey was very well balanced, top heavy for extra force and power. She smiled. She was beginning to like this mace.

With a squealing war-cry, the pigs attacked. Ruffnut leaped forward to meet them, sweeping the ranks aside with devastating mace blows. However, they were coming from all sides, and her efforts didn't prevent them from reaching the other two teens, who both launched themselves into full combat, slashing with their weapons and trying to keep the boars away from Tuffnut. The swine were clever, though. They were pushing the teens apart. How dare these humans come anywhere near their young? Outrageous!

Ruffnut backed slowly towards her brother, swinging Macey left and right. In a lull, she turned for a second to look at him, before the boars were back again in full force. They came from everywhere, unstoppable. She staggered back, tripping over her twin's lifeless form. Macey clattered away, just out of reach. They were on her in an instant. Ripping. Tearing. Hideous beasts, squealing with rage. Ruffnut cried out in pain and terror, attracting the attention of both Hiccup and Astrid, who were fighting their way back towards her. Astrid swiped a hole in the mass of swirling swine and pushed Hiccup through it so that he could help his comrade. By her side, the chief's son attacked with all his might, pulling the swarming pigs off his friend. With a final, terrible shout, the athletic blonde sent a last swathe of wild boar flying to the ground. The rest slunk away into the undergrowth once again, red eyes still gleaming.

Long chapter! I decided to stop it there, seeing as the next chapter promises to be long as well. Hope everyone is enjoying so far.
R+R!

8. Sunset and Sickness

Okay, We're nearing the end of this beautiful story, and I already have the next one planned out, with more twins! Woohoo! _

"Ooh, man..." Slowly, her eyes opened. Everything was a blur of colour. She blinked, bewildered. "Unh... ugh... What

happened...?"

"You were knocked out, Ruff. Just lie still a sec, you'll be fine" Hiccups voice drifted to her as though through a dream.

"Wh...where's Tuffnut?" She asked.

"Right here. He's, uh... he's okay." Hiccup didn't sound sure. Despite her instructions, Ruffnut sat up, although she almost immediately wished she hadn't.

"Owch!" She moaned. Her clothes were smothered with dirt and hoof prints. Everything around her was slowly coming back into focus, and she took the opportunity to look around. Astrid was leaning against a tree not far away, watching her. Ruff gave the blonde a wonky smile. Turning, she saw Hiccup digging in his pack for something, and beyond him...

"Tuff...?" She went to crawl closer, but her leader put a firm hand on her shoulder, making her stay. "Awh, come on!" Her arms automatically folded as she pouted moodily at him. Hiccup just gave her a look and carried on searching his belongings.

Ruffnut looked to the sky defeatedly. Beyond the trees, it was lit a bright, flaming orange, with pinky clouds scudding by. There was a twilight chill in the air. It wouldn't be long until darkness fell.

"How long was I out?" She asked the boy beside her, who answered whilst handing her a small lump of yak meat.

"Not that long. Quarter of an hour, maybe?"

"What about Tuff? Is he okay?"

"I... I don't know" Hiccup admitted with a shrug. "I don't think he can hold on much longer. We have to hurry if we're going to cure this sickness. I expect half of the village is already suffering from it by now. I hope my dad's okay..." He was almost talking to himself, staring into the shadows. Ruffnut tried, very carefully, to stand up before he noticed, but he quickly pulled her down again. Staring daggers at him, she lay down and turned her back on the chief's son.

Lying down certainly made her feel better, and so too did eating the meat that she'd been given. When she got up next, Hiccup didn't stop her from standing and moving to her brother's side. He was conscious, barely, staring at nothing as though it was the most interesting thing in the world.

"Hey there, Tuff." Ruffnut felt slightly awkward talking to him. He grunted slightly. "Uh, so... how are you doing?" Nothing. She sighed and turned to the others, who were looking at her in that way again. She felt her cheeks heating up.

"Ruff, we need to go. Tuffnut will be fine if we leave him here" Hiccup said softly.

"No, we're not leaving him." She scowled. There was a finality to it

that Hiccup couldn't argue with. He watched as she leant down to her brother and whispered to him.

"Remember when mum and dad used to give us piggy-back rides when we were kids?"

"Uh-huh..."

"Give me your arms."

Painstakingly, Ruffnut lifted her twin and heaved him onto her back. Stooping under his weight, she groaned.

"Lose some weight, fatso! Ugh, let's go before I drop him..." The sister complained. Hiccup nodded, swinging his pack onto his back. He looked uncharacteristically tired, his skin looking pale in the half-light.

"Shouldn't be far now" He muttered, more to himself than anyone else. "We'll be there in no time..."

"Hiccup, what happens then? We can't travel back in the dark!" Astrid cried.

"Let's cross that bridge when we come to it..."

They continued to walk, the trees seeming to get denser and closer. Astrid looked around with a sense of foreboding and clutched the weapons closer to her chest. She was carrying both her own axe and Macey, since Ruffnut probably couldn't manage that as well as her brother's lump on her back. The sky had turned from orange to pink now, a bright array of colours dancing through it on the backs of the clouds. Watching it, she smiled, despite herself, and checked that her team-mates were still around her. To her surprise, she found that they were all quite a way behind her, and so she waited patiently for them to catch up, once again looking around herself.

"Guys..." She breathed, her eyes alighting on something through the trees. "Look!"

Ruffnut squinted. "Uh, what? I just see trees"

"Through the trees! There!"

"More trees?"

"And through them?" Astrid was too excited to be annoyed.

"I have no idea what you're looking at. All I see is trees."

"I see it too" Hiccup smiled broadly. Through the trunks lay their destination- the Dragon-Nip fields.

"Oh, it's about time!" Astrid cried with joy and bounded through the undergrowth. Hiccup and Ruffnut followed at a slower pace.

"I don't get it!" The twin moaned. "What did she- Eew! He dribbled on me! That's disgusting!"

Hiccup chuckled. "The Dragon-Nip fields. This is where we've been

heading all day."

"Oh, right!" she drawled, smiling lopsidedly. "that's where we were going..."

They left the torment of the tall trees and stepped out into the fields of Dragon-Nip, pink light illuminating their features. Astrid burst out of the long grass, laughing joyfully, as though it was having its effect on her too. In a way, it was, for seeing the destination of their journey had filled her with satisfaction.

"No we've just got to find the Herb-Grass"

"The Grerb" Ruffnut corrected. She placed her brother down on the soft grass, his back resting against a large rock and his head lolling to one side. He looked worse than ever; she could only imagine the state Snotlout and Fishlegs would be in. Her brow creased in concern.

Hiccup stood, surveying the lush fields, his arms crossed. His face had turned pale, his eyes hollow, and his fingers trembled. He met Astrid's concerned gaze and let out a shaky breath, his knees weakening.

"Hiccup...?" She tentatively picked her way through the grass towards him. "Hiccup, what's wrong?"

He tried to stagger towards her, but fell to his knees at her feet. "Astrid..." He breathed. She looked utterly bewildered.

"Hiccup, what's wrong? Are you sick?"

"Yes..." He admitted, as she put her arms around him. "I've been sick for a very long time..."

Okay, thank you to all of my regular readers and to anyone new who's giving me a go! I really hope you're enjoying this. Next chapter: The herb-grass!

9. Toothless Returns

Okay, this chapter promises to be heart-string tugging (but only if I write it right), so hold on to your hats!

"Oh, Hiccup..." Astrid held him in her arms, felt how much he was shaking and how weak he was. The cheif's son looked her in the eye, head against her chest, and whispered:

>"Find the Herb-Grass... Don't worry about me..." Astrid shook her head<p>

"I'm not leaving you, Hiccup. No way."

Hiccup sighed. "You're so stubborn sometimes. You have to find it or I will die, along with Tuff, Snotlout and Fishlegs. Please, Astrid. Just this once, don't be stubborn..."

Astrid nodded finally. "I'll be right back, I promise," She smiled at him, and left his side to begin searching. Ruffnut joined her, scouring the ground for any sign.

"Oh, there's nothing!" Astrid cried angrily. Her face contorted with rage as she looked back towards the boy in the grass. He was staring at something in the distance. Frowning, she followed his gaze, but there didn't seem to be anything there.

>"Keep looking, Ruffnut. I'm going back to check on the others." <p>

Leaving the twin behind, she made her way back to Hiccup and put her hand on his shoulder.

"What are you looking at, Hiccup?" she asked quietly.

The chief's son looked up. "Toothless..." He croaked, pointing. Astrid sighed.

"Oh, Hiccup..." She obviously thought he was delirious.

"No, Astrid... Toothless!" She followed his finger. Far away, near the cliffs, a small, black shape was staring back at them, unmistakeable. They sat in silence for a second, disbelieving, and then, slowly, Hiccup rose off the ground. His heart raced and soared and a smile was plastered on his face.

"Toothless!" He called. Astrid grabbed his waist as he called the dragon's name again. "Toothless!" They watched with joy as the dragon leapt forward and bolted towards them, and the blonde started as Hiccup threw her supporting hands away and ran straight for the dragon.

Toothless gave a screaming call, running towards Hiccup as fast as his legs could carry him. His human, too, was streaking across the fields, crying out his name in joy, his soul lifted. The joy in his life was finally returned. Toothless was back. Nothing could possibly have held boy and dragon apart, not the sickness, not their respective disabilities, not the thick grass tugging at their ankles, because no feeling could be stronger than their love for one another. Toothless gave a joyous cry as they came together, and Hiccup wasted no time in throwing his arms around the dragon's sleek, black neck. His throat was choked with elation, tears threatening to fall from his eyes.

"Oh, Toothless! I missed you, bud!" He cried, and the dragon frolicked around him, grunting with relish. He caught a glimpse of the two girls running in to greet their friend.

But the joy was leaving Hiccup exhausted. The sickness rushed up to meet him, and almost before the other teens could get to him, his knees buckled and he stumbled. Ruffnut grabbed him.

>"Whoa, where are you going?" She joked, lowering him to the floor. Toothless instantly began to fuss over his rider, who was slowly losing consciousness.<p>

"Easy there, Toothless" Astrid soothed, stroking his head. Hiccup reached out his hand and placed it against the Night Fury's quivering nose. Toothless snuffled softly, looking at his best friend with his huge, emerald eyes opened wide, like saucers. But instead of leaving, Toothless stood over Hiccup. He made a coughing, choking sound, deep in his throat, and they all knew what was coming next. His throat muscles began to ripple, the coughing getting louder, and finally,

into Hiccup's lap, Toothless spat out a large clump of grass. Purple grass.

Astrid gasped. He'd found it!

>"Toothless, you're brilliant!" She cried, giving him a hug, and he made a sort of snorting, laughing noise, nudging her. Hiccup gave a weak moan and slumped onto his side, and the Night Fury gave a sudden whine. Pulling a pouch from her bag, Astrid shoved the Herb-Grass in and pulled it tightly closed.<p>

"Ruffnut, You need to stay here. Toothless can't carry us all, and I'm not sure you'll enjoy it much either. I've never flown Toothless before, but I have to get the Herb-Grass and Hiccup back to the village." Astrid instructed, lifting Hiccup onto the dragon's back.

"Sure thing, Astrid" She croaked, giving a cough. Astrid cringed slightly. She could tell the twin was also getting sick, but she had no other choice.

"I'll come back for you, I promise!" the blonde called down to Ruffnut. She slid her foot into the stirrup and tested it, flicking the tail back and forth. "Okay, Toothless... gently, now. Help me out here"

The last thing Astrid saw of the Dragon-Nip fields was Ruffnut sitting beside Tuffnut and stroking back his hair. Then, Toothless's powerful wing beats whisked her away.

Nothing could have brightened Ruffnut's day more than seeing Toothless return over the Treetops and descend towards her. The sun was gone, hidden behind the horizon, though a small amount of it's light still reflected off Toothless's wings as he soared down to meet her. Astrid leapt off his back as he landed, and the twin tried to jump up to meet her, but found her limbs weren't responding. Heaving herself upright, she stumbled a little.

>"Astrid... is everyone okay?" She groaned softly.<p>

"Gothi's giving everyone the cure right now. You two need to get back for it as well now, okay?" She gave both twins a reassuring smile, but the air echoed empty of a stupid comment from Tuffnut. With the other twin's help, Astrid lifted him up, and grabbed Ruffnut around the waist as she too almost fell.

"Are you sure he can take us all?" She asked softly

"He has to. I'm not flying in the dark" Astrid replied, boosting her up and then mounting herself.

"Come one, Toothless," she whispered, "Let's fly"

10. The Dragons Return

I'm very honoured by everyone who has read this story this far! This should be the last chapter, where all is resolved. However, I have a new story coming out soon, so keep watching my space here. It will have Hiccup and the twins in it. Also, other one shots may crop up here and there about the other characters, seeing as I don't write a lot about them. Anyway, Hiccup is sick! We must get on with the story

to find out what happens!_

The musical accompaniment of this chapter starts with Forbidden Friendship. When Astrid gets on Stormfly's back, skip to See You Tomorrow and listen right through to the end part of Test Drive.

(Note to self, base a story on Hiccup and Toothless at some point~)

Astrid walked slowly down the long, dirt track, watching the waves lap at the cliff-face below her feet. In her hand were clasped three precisely sharpened throwing axes. She could just as easily gone into the forest to practice her accuracy, but she felt as though, after a week without the dragons, she could do with the walk just to get away from the hoards of sick Vikings. Some, like Ruffnut, had recovered quickly, but the rest were taking a very long time about it. She huffed an angry sigh and looked up at the pale blue sky. How could it be such a bright day when she felt so dark inside? It made her want to throw one of axes at the Gods who had made it so. Clenching her teeth, she contained her anger and satisfied herself knowing that she could vent it all in the arena. Killing wooden boxes always made her feel better.

She thought about Snotlout, lying cold in his bed, too weak to get out and not wanting to eat. He was such a drama queen, and she knew for a fact that she would already be out doing things in his position. She thought of Fishlegs, who contented himself with reading books, propped up in his bed, drinking warm yak milk and eating what small bites he could manage. Then, there was Tuffnut, who was already trying to take out his anger on his sister, and was therefore being avoided by almost everyone. Luckily, his parents weren't afraid enough not to care for him. But everyone, everyone missed their dragons. That is, everyone but Hiccup. Her brow creased as she thought about the state he was in, tucked up in his bed with Toothless by his side. _I mean, he's always been frail, _she thought, _but he looks worse than ever. Pale skin, sunken eyes, he doesn't even talk to Toothless any more, let alone anyone else. _She bit her lip nervously, the urge to send an axe flying into the rocks around her overwhelming her. _Just calm down, _she told herself firmly. _What would Hiccup think if I lost my cool over him? _Shaking her thoughts away, she rubbed her forehead with her free hand.

Her eyes caught on something heading her way through the sky. It looked like a large bird, flapping sporadically, rushing somewhere. As she watched, it dipped and dived in the sky like it was dancing. She wondered what kind of joy could make a creature do such a thing. As the bird got closer, she realised how big it really was. Almost as big as a...

"_Dragon...." She breathed. "No way... but..." She squinted closer. The creature flew faster and faster, heading straight for her. She didn't know whether to run or fight, just standing there with a rather bemused look on her face. Silhouetted against the sun, it was hard to tell what colour the creature was, but if she had to make a guess, she would say it was perhaps... cyan.

"No...." She breathed incredulously. It swooped down and landed a few feet away. A Deadly Nadder, cyan and yellow in colour, with sharp yellow eyes. It hopped from foot to foot, chattering as it watched

the incredible change in emotion in the girl's face. Her mouth hung open in disbelief, and then she cried out in joy, tears of elation blurring her vision.

"Stormfly!" Dropping her axes, Astrid galloped forward and threw her arms around the Nadder's neck, sobbing openly. "You're back! Oh, I missed you so much!" Stormfly chirruped apologetically, nuzzling her rider for something to eat.

>"Don't you ever go off like that again, you hear me? Not ever!" the blonde laughed, wiping her face clean of the salty-sweet tears.

"Wait... if you're back... that means..." A light came on in her eyes as she looked around her. The sky was full of dragons. "The dragons are returning! That must mean... Stormfly! Take me to the village!" Tossing herself into the saddle that the Nadder was still wearing, she dug her heels into her flanks and watched as her dragon spread its wings. Flying again send chills running up and down Astrid's spine. Her skin turned to goose-flesh. A wide grin was plastered on her face as they shot at speed towards the village.<p>

Her axes lay abandoned on the track behind her.

The chaos of Vikings and dragons reuniting in the streets of Berk caused an uproar of the kind never before seen. Astrid looked down from her saddle, high above the town. She could see the twins gripping onto their Zippleback with such determination, she was almost unsure whether they would ever let go. Snotlout was running circles around Hookfang the Monstrous Nightmare, apparently with no illness at all. There was Fishlegs, tackling Meatlug to the ground, and here was a group of children chasing a flight of Terrible Terrors through the streets. But, through all the joy, The chief of Berk stomped through the village, a dark look still adorning his face. Gobber seemed to be chasing him and trying to insight some of the celebrations into him. He barked something over his shoulder, and the blacksmith retreated.

Astrid put a clenched fist to her lips, concern written all over her features. She was about to dip down to speak with Stoick when, all of a sudden, there came an almighty roar, and Toothless leapt from the Chiefs roof, skittering around like an excitable puppy. The door to the shack opened, and Hiccup appeared, looking haggard but curious. Stoick gave a cry of pure happiness and raced towards his son, gathering him in his arms and squeezing him tight.

>"My boy!" He was heard to shout. "You're awake! Oh, Hiccup, you're back!"<p>

"Yeah, dad..." He heaved for breath as his father let him go, leaning on the thick-set man for support as he caught his breath. Toothless was instantly upon him, radiating joy as he licked the boy's face.

"Whoa there, bud!" Hiccup laughed. Astrid swooped towards him, leaping off Stormfly even before she landed and standing before Hiccup, her happiness barely suppressed as she drank in the sight. Biting her lip, she raced forward and grabbed him, hugging him tightly. She felt his hands on her back, struggling to find a place to go, and so she pulled back and looked him in the eye.

"Hey, Astrid..." He breathed, smiling lopsidedly.

"Oh, Hiccup..." She didn't hold back before giving him a short kiss.

"That's for getting better..." Hiccup instantly shied away, afraid of what might come next, and Astrid certainly lived up to expectations as she delivered a swift punch to the arm. "That's for everything else!" She snapped in mock anger, before laughing at his whine of pain and assuring him that she really was glad to see him.

"Everyone! To the Great Hall! I call a magnificent feast!" Stoick boomed, to the cheers and whoops of the Viking crowd, who, with their dragons, began to march up to the entrance of the Hall.

"Actually, dad... I think I'd rather stay here" Came a feeble voice from behind him. Hiccup looked into his dad's eyes and smiled weakly. "I don't think I could manage a whole feast right now..."

Stoick clapped his son on the shoulder, powerfully enough to almost knock him over. "It's okay, son. You and Astrid can stay here. Have a feast of your own. Just you rest and come with us when you're good and ready." Although the chief of the Hooligan tribe might have been slightly put out by his son not wanting to feast, he understood his son's meaning and he hid it well behind that broad, bearded smile. Turning to go, he gave Hiccup one last pat on the arm and then followed the rest of the tribe to their great feast.

Toothless gave a grumbling yowl, which Stormfly eagerly added to with a shriek. They were both ravenous. Astrid turned to Hiccup with a soft smile, leading the boy back indoors and sitting him on a chair before the fire, blankets wrapped around him.

"I'll get the dragon's dinner. You stay here with Toothless and stay warm." She said breezily, as if the gesture was nothing out of the ordinary.

"Astrid, you're amazing..." Hiccup slurred, his eyelids drooping. It gained a broader grin from her, before he slipped off to sleep.

The gnashing, smacking sounds coming from the corner would have put any normal person off their food: however, the two Vikings sat cross-legged beside the fire were well used to the sounds of dragons eating while they ate their own dinners. Astrid watched Hiccup push the small breast of chicken around his plate for a while as she picked at her own.

"Are you going to eat that or are you giving it flying lessons?" She quipped. He looked up at her questioningly.

"I guess I'm just not that hungry." He replied shortly. His gaze fell onto the plate before him.

"You've got to eat something, Hiccup." Chastised the young girl, and then she added; "If not for yourself, for me."

With a grunt, Hiccup took a bite. It was like watching him eat raw fish. He chewed it slowly for a long time, then laboriously swallowed. Toothless peered over his shoulder expectantly, looking from the food to Hiccup and back. The dragon smacked his lips.

"Oh come on! Being mothered by Astrid is bad enough, now you're joining in!"

Astrid couldn't help but laugh. The Night Fury was so comical in his mannerisms and the way he acted towards his rider. Begrudgingly, Hiccup ate as much of his food as he could, before putting the plate on the floor for Toothless to finish off.

"Hiccup..." Astrid began. She met his gaze and held it. "There was something you said, just before you collapsed in the fields... something I couldn't stop thinking about..."

"Yeah? Which was...?" Hiccup asked curiously.

"You said, "I've been sick for a very long time". I mean, you could have been out of it at the time, but..."

"It was true. I had been." Hiccup stated before she could even finish. "I was sick, all through the journey, from around the end of the cliff walk, but I knew I couldn't stop. I had to keep going because... because I felt like I'd be letting you down if I stopped. I was the leader, like my dad, and leaders have to be strong in the face of adversity. They have to stand up and be brave. So... I was." He finished simply. Astrid looked at him admirably.

"Oh Hiccup... you certainly were that..."

She leant forward, very slowly, and their lips met.
>Toothless hid his head behind his wing.<p>

All done! That's all, folks! I really hope you enjoyed reading this as much as I enjoyed writing it! Stay tuned for new stories and don't forget to read my other one-shots. Oh, and R+R! That's what keeps me writing!_

For now, this is Dissidia180 signing off!_

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